

## History repeats itself for a Russian-American

Story and photo by Sgt. Greg Heath  
4<sup>th</sup> Public Affairs Detachment

**BAGRAM, Afghanistan** – When Spc. Yevgeniy Ovsisher was conscripted in the United Soviet Socialist Republic Army in 1989, his country was nearing the end of a disastrous 10-year war in Afghanistan, during which more than 1,000,000 Afghans and 13,000 of his countrymen had lost their lives.

Although he was never sent to fight in the fateful war during his two years as a soldier in the Soviet Army, more than a decade later he would find himself in the same war-torn country, but this time fighting the war on terrorism as a Soldier in the United States Army.

Ovsisher was raised in a Jewish household in Moscow during the time of communist rule in the former USSR. After finishing his mandatory tour in the Soviet Army, Ovsisher witnessed firsthand the fall of the Soviet Union and the subsequent end of communism in his country in 1991. Although this country was undergoing great social changes during the time, Ovsisher and his family found themselves the victims of religious persecution and anti-Semitism in their own homeland.



*Spc. Yevgeniy Ovsisher was a conscript in the Soviet Army at the end of the Soviet Occupation in Afghanistan and then immigrated to the United States in 1994. He joined the U.S. Army in 1999 and now serves with Co. A, 3-6 FA, 10th Mtn. Div. in Afghanistan as the ammo team chief on a 105mm Howitzer.*

“It was really scary there for us,” said Ovsisher, about the religious persecution his family faced, and which ultimately led to their attempt to escape to Israel as refugees.

Unable to gain access to Israel, Ovsisher decided to move his wife and immediate family to the United States.

In February 1994, at the age of 24, Ovsisher

and his family moved to their new home in the borough of Brooklyn in New York City, to unite with his wife’s family who had immigrated there years earlier.

Equipped with a working knowledge of English he had learned in school, and little

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## Civil Affairs to open new reconstruction sight

Story by Staff Sgt. Dave S. Thompson  
211<sup>th</sup> Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

**KANDAHAR, Afghanistan** – A wise man once said that for change to take place, one has to want change.

However, for a people so crippled by oppression and poverty, and uncertain of whom to follow and whom to fear, change is not easy to achieve. In an often frustrating effort to establish that they are here to help, the members of the 321<sup>st</sup> Civil Affairs Battalion from San Antonio, Texas, are

working fervently to win the hearts and minds of the people in this southeastern Afghan city.

As part of the Coalition Joint Civil-Military Operations Task Force (CJCMOTF), their mission is to extend the positive aspects of the legitimate government of Afghanistan into the southern region by working with the local governor to develop the infrastructure of the area.

But, given the staggering imbalance between governmental requirements and the available resources, progress is slow in coming. Add to that the numerous issues of instability throughout the country, and the task is

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# World News (Compiled from CNN.com)



*Dru Sjodin has been missing since Nov. 22.*

## 'No chance we'll find Dru alive'

**GRAND FORKS, N.D.** — The sheriff heading up the investigation of a North Dakota college student's disappearance said Tuesday that he doesn't think 22-year-old Dru Sjodin will be found alive.

"It looks, at this time ... like there's no chance we're going to find Dru alive," Grand Forks County Sheriff Dan Hill told reporters. "I believe that it is more of a recovery than a rescue [mission] at this point in time."

Hill said blood found in Alfonso Rodriguez's car matches Sjodin's DNA, and that a four-inch folding knife was also found in the car. A shoe belonging to Sjodin was found beneath a bridge near a river, Hill said.

Rodriguez, 50, has been charged with Sjodin's kidnapping. His maroon, four-door 2002 Mercury Sable was impounded by authorities before his arrest December 1 in Crookston, Minnesota.

Earlier Tuesday, a source confirmed reports that the knife found in the trunk of Rodriguez's car matched a knife sheath found near Sjodin's car in the parking lot of the Grand Forks shopping mall where she vanished November 22.

Sjodin, of Pequot Lakes, Minnesota, was last heard from while talking to her boyfriend on a cell phone that day after she left her job at a Victoria's Secret store.

The governors of North Dakota and Minnesota announced that National Guard troops would begin aiding in the search for Sjodin on Friday.

"We're determined to find Dru," North Dakota Gov. John Hoeven said. "This is something that has touched all North Dakotans."



*North Korea has previously sought security guarantees from the U.S.*

## U.S., China reject NK nuke offer

**WASHINGTON** — North Korea's willingness to freeze its nuclear weapons program in exchange for U.S. concessions falls short of what is necessary to end its standoff with the United States, President George W. Bush said in rejecting the offer.

The president's statement, and similar remarks by White House and U.S. State Department spokesmen, appeared part of jockeying for position in advance of another round of talks with North Korea.

"The goal of the United States is not for a freeze of the nuclear program," Bush said. "The goal is to dismantle a nuclear weapons program in a verifiable and irreversible way."

"That," he said, "is the clear message we are sending to the North Koreans."

The president spoke at a brief news conference with Premier Wen Jiabao of China, who visited Bush at the White House.

The Chinese are working to revive stalled talks between North Korea and the United States, South Korea, Japan, Russia and China after a five-month pause.

## Iraq attacks injure 33 U.S. troops

**BAGHDAD, Iraq** — Bombings at two U.S. bases in northern Iraq wounded at least 33 American soldiers Tuesday — attacks that occurred less than three hours apart, U.S. military officials said.

In the first attack, an apparent suicide bomber tried to ram a car through the main gate of the U.S. Army's 101 Airborne Division base at Tall Afar when the vehicle exploded, wounding 31 American soldiers, U.S. military officials said.

Col. Michael Linnington, commander of the 3rd Brigade of the 101st, said eight soldiers had

been taken to medical facilities. He said the blast left a sizable crater in the ground and shattered glass in buildings surrounding the area.

According to Maj. Trey Cate with the 101st, most of the injuries were from flying debris and glass and none of them were considered life threatening. He said that a few others with minor wounds — cuts, scratches and the like — may have contributed to the higher counts of injuries reported earlier. "The vehicle, what we believe to be a car of some type, attempted to gain entrance to the compound," Cate said. "It was fired upon by our security forces and detonated."

The attack took place between 6 and 7 a.m. at the base about 40 miles (60 kilometers) west of Mosul. Cate said the bombing is under investigation.

In the second attack — about 8:30 a.m. — a suicide bomber approached a gate at Forward Operating Base Thunder in Ba'qubah — about 30 miles (48 kilometers) northeast of Baghdad — pretending to be ill, a military source said.

When troops did not come to his aid, the man detonated himself, wounding two soldiers, who are being treated for what the source described as superficial wounds.

## Russians look for bomber

**MOSCOW, Russia** — Russian police are searching for a woman in connection with a suicide attack in central Moscow that killed six people, including the bomber.

The bomb went off outside the landmark National Hotel, just across the street from the Red Square on Tuesday morning, also injuring 13 people. The Moscow attack comes four days after a suicide bomber killed 44 people on a commuter train in southern Russia.

President Vladimir Putin was quick to condemn Tuesday's bombing, calling it a bid to undermine democracy and the economy in Russia, while Moscow's mayor said Chechen separatists may be behind the attack.

Russia held parliamentary elections on Sunday, and officials have linked the latest bombing to the vote, saying the attackers wanted to send a message by exploding a bomb at the center of the Russian government.

Police say two female suspects may have been targeting the nearby Parliament building when one of the bombs went off accidentally.

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else, he spent his first year getting adjusted, finding work and learning the little things about the English language that you could only find in the Big Apple.

Moving to Brooklyn was a big change for Ovsisher and his family, but it wasn't an entirely painful experience, he said. "We went from big city to big city, from Moscow to New York, so it wasn't uncomfortable."

One of the biggest adjustments he had to make was accepting everything that was now available to him in the "land of plenty."

"The biggest thing that took getting used to was supermarkets," said Ovsisher. "I know it for a fact that especially old people (from Russia), when they went to the supermarkets they had heart attacks. There is nothing like (supermarkets) in Russia. You go to Russian stores and it's just empty or you have a big line for meat, or whatever."

Ovsisher spent the next few years working and attended school on and off, but he soon felt he needed a change.

In 1999 he decided to go to a job fair at Brooklyn College to find a better job when an Army recruiter approached him.

Remembering his days in the Soviet Army, which he politely called "horrible," he thought his military days were behind him, but now with a young child and in need of a steady pay check and medical benefits, after talking to the recruiter he decided to enlist in the U.S. Army as a field artilleryman.

Soon after, he was on his way to basic training, just shy of 30 year old and starting over as a private. Though this time around wasn't nearly as hard as the first time, he said.

"Physically it was hard, but mentally it wasn't bad because it had been a lot tougher in the Soviet Army," Ovsisher said, remembering how soldiers were routinely treated roughly during his days as a young conscript.

His first assignment was with Company A, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 6<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Regiment at Fort Drum, N.Y., which was relatively convenient for Ovsisher, since he was only a six and a half hour drive from his family in Brooklyn.

Sgt. Jeff Jackson arrived at the unit as a private around the same time as Ovsisher and said that the new Russian-American soldier easily adapted to the U.S. military ways.

"He's a real good soldier; as long as you tell him to do anything and he understands what you're telling him he has no problem doing it. There's a little language barrier since he's from Russia, but I'm from Georgia," said Jackson with a grin, about his own Georgia southern accent.

Ovsisher quickly got a taste of the soldiers' life while spending many days and nights training in the field at Fort Drum and during a rotation to Kosovo.

But one day in particular, Sept. 11, 2001, was crystallized in Ovsisher's mind as a defining day in his life in America.

"I was training during Sept. 11 at Fort Drum when I heard about it, and I was shocked," Ovsisher said.

His thoughts immediately went to his wife whose work sometimes took her into Manhattan. "I couldn't get a hold of her, or anybody," Ovsisher said, but luckily his family was safe, but the same couldn't be said about the thousands who died that day.

"How many people died, just for nothing," he added.

Soon after the tragic day, the U.S. announced it was beginning a global war on terrorism, and would be sending U.S. soldiers into Afghanistan — news that struck a deep-seated nerve in Ovsisher.

"I still hadn't forgotten the 10 year war in Afghanistan and then Sept. 11, my heart was broken still from it," Ovsisher said. "I felt I had to pay my debt to this country for all that happened."

Ovsisher became a U.S. citizen in 2002, and then in August of 2003, he was deployed along with the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division to Afghanistan.

When he told his extended family, still living in Russia, that he would be deploying to Afghanistan, they expressed fear and doubt stemming from deep-rooted memories of the Soviet occupation.

"When I wrote my mom a letter and I said 'hi' from Afghanistan, she said, 'You have to find some other war instead of Afghanistan,'" Ovsisher said.

Since arriving here, he's participated in Operation Mountain Resolve in the north-eastern province of Nuristan. Ovsisher and his fellow field artillerymen manned 105mm Howitzers and were in charge of defending soldiers operating out of Firebase Catamount.

Living in a cornfield with the large field artillery pieces and exposed to the elements during the month-long operation, the experience had been for the most part "uncomfortable and cold," said Ovsisher. But while operating in the province on the outskirts of a remote Afghan village, he quickly realized that although the Americans were bringing the war on terrorism to Afghanistan, his adopted homeland was going in with a decidedly different attitude than the former Soviet Union, and this fact made for an entirely different war.

"I think we're doing pretty good over here," Ovsisher said. "I don't see any fear in the Afghan's eyes, but when the Russians were here they probably were scared."

His unit had performed numerous indirect fire missions during the operation, in an attempt to rid the area of the any Anti Coalition Militants operating in the area.

During the operation, Ovsisher was also given opportunities to interact with Afghans around the field artillery camp, and to shake hands with the locals and play with the kids, which is something he never would have imagined over a decade ago while serving in the Soviet Army.

Ovsisher has since returned with his unit from the operation, and hopes to be promoted to sergeant soon.

Although he still has many months before he will rotate back to the states, he looks forward to devoting more time at home with his wife, 7-year-old son, and 1-year-old daughter, and preparing for his future beyond the Army.

Once his enlistment is finished, he plans on putting his Montgomery G.I. Bill money toward a degree in business administration so that he can start his own business.

Ovsisher remembers the young man who left the Soviet Union almost a decade ago, who narrowly avoided fighting in the Soviet war in Afghanistan, who immigrated to another land to find better opportunity, but ultimately ended up fighting a new war on its behalf. He is humble though, and grateful, he says, for the opportunities that he's been given by his new homeland.

"I am just glad that I can help the country that accepted me, and to pay for the damage done Sept. 11," he said. "I'm trying to do my best."



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made even more difficult.

Lt. Col. Robert Duffy, commander of the unit, says that progress is being made however, and he and his team are diligent in their efforts to bring about change. Duffy is spearheading a project to move his operations from the U.S. military compound at Kandahar Air Field to Kandahar city proper, in an effort to better interface with residents of the community.

Called the Provincial Reconstruction Team or PRT, the complex will be used as a base to provide assistance to the impoverished people in the area. To help stimulate the economy, the colonel hired local contractors to renovate the sprawling compound that was once a fruit cannery. He stated that by moving into an existing compound, he was able to spend 40 percent less than what was budgeted for the project.

Since arriving in Kandahar in early July, the 321st CA team has nominated and started more than \$2.6 million worth of projects throughout the region; everything from schools and clinics to wells, bridges, and road improvements. Over half a million dollars worth of those projects have been completed.

Duffy says the complex is designed to house 120 coalition service members and 75 Afghan National Army soldiers comfortably. He added that the facility has the capacity to hold twice that number for short periods. The PRT is scheduled for a grand opening ceremony on Dec. 11.

In addition to its close proximity to Kandahar's governor, the central location of the PRT in the city will allow Civil Affairs to work more closely with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) here to assist in Afghanistan's reconstruction efforts, and will also serve to attract other NGO involvement.

On any given day, Duffy and his crew can be seen driving around town assessing the needs of villagers, checking on the progress of a new school, or handing out blankets and jackets to those in need; all in an effort to improve the lives of the people of Afghanistan.

The PRT will be a welcome and much needed addition to the city of Kandahar. Most of its citizens are happy to see the Americans move in. Perhaps someday all Afghans will realize that the members of CJCMOTF are indeed the good guys, and they are here to help.

## Bagram Air Base MWR presents

### "Dirty Harry"

1530Z at the MWR building:

A cop with little regard for rules (but who always gets results) tries to track down a serial killer.

**Tomorrow's movie:**

"A Perfect World"



## Local weather

### TWO-DAY REGIONAL WEATHER FORECAST:

	Today	Thursday
<b>Bagram:</b>	Clear H: 55F L: 30F	Partly Cloudy H: 52F L: 32F
<b>Kandahar:</b>	Mostly Clear H: 63F L: 36F	Clear H: 59F L: 30F
<b>Kabul:</b>	Clear H: 55F L: 30F	Partly Cloudy H: 52F L: 32F
<b>Uzbekistan:</b>	Rain H: 65F L: 38F	Cloudy w/snow H: 40F L: 28F

Weather forecast courtesy of the Bagram Combat Weather Team

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# Coalition Sports Zone

(Compiled from *SI.com*)



*Bartolo Colon has won 14 or more games in each of the past six seasons.*

## Angels sign Colon to four-year contract

**ANAHEIM, Calif.** – The Anaheim Angels took one of the top pitchers off the free-agent market, agreeing Tuesday to a four-year contract with Bartolo Colon.

Anaheim had offered a deal worth about \$48 million, one baseball official familiar with the negotiations had said Monday.

"I'm happy to be with the new team and have the opportunity to be able to win with them," Colon said, speaking through an interpreter.

This might not be Anaheim's only blockbuster deal. If the Alex Rodriguez-Manny Ramirez deal goes through, five-time All-Star short-stop Nomar Garciaparra would be out of a job. It's believed the Red Sox might try to trade him to the Angels for a pitcher, possibly Jarrod Washburn, or second baseman Adam Kennedy. Third baseman Troy Glaus' name has also been mentioned.

"We're trying to keep our options open, but we feel we are in position to maneuver now," said Arte Moreno, who purchased the Angels from The Walt Disney Co. last spring.

The Chicago White Sox badly wanted Colon back, with general manager Ken Williams offering a three-year contract worth a reported \$36 million – the largest ever for a White Sox pitcher. But Colon rejected the offer in October.

## Nextel Cup pondering 10-race dash

**CHARLOTTE, N.C.** – NASCAR is considering a radical change to its point system that would create a 10-race championship chase between the top 10 drivers in the standings.

The plan would lock in the top 10 drivers after the 26th race of the 2004 season. They would then compete over the final 10 races – with their standings possibly being reset to zero – for the Nextel Cup championship.

The goal is to cast a bigger spotlight on the drivers in the championship hunt, specifically in the top 10," NASCAR spokesman Mike Zizzo said Tuesday. "This plan would let them battle it out and give us the drama of a playoff stretch like other sports."

NASCAR hopes to make a decision concerning the points system by the middle of January, Zizzo said. The season-opening Daytona 500 is Feb. 15.

## Magic end losing streak with comeback

**ORLANDO, Fla.** – The Orlando Magic turned up their game – and the volume.

"We had that music crunked, man," Tracy McGrady said after the Magic beat the Phoenix Suns 105-98 on Monday night to snap a 19-game losing streak.

As the music blared, coach Johnny Davis was accepting a bottle of champagne in honor of his first victory since taking over for the fired Doc Rivers on Nov. 18.

"For the first time in a long time, we have a very happy locker room," Davis said. "And, for the first time in a long time, I can actually smile."

The Magic, 1-9 under Davis, avoided becoming only the sixth team in NBA history to lose 20 straight games.

The losing streak was the NBA's longest since 1997-98, when the Denver Nuggets lost 23 straight to tie the 1995-96 Vancouver Grizzlies for most consecutive losses in one season.



*The Orlando bench celebrates during the final seconds of the final seconds of the win.*

## Judge rejects bid to seal in Bryant case

**EAGLE, Colo.** – The judge in the Kobe Bryant case rejected a prosecution motion Tuesday to seal all court filings related to evidence in the high-profile sexual assault case.

Instead, state District Judge Terry Ruckriegle said, attorneys in the case can file motions about Bryant and his accuser that leave sensitive details to be filed separately under seal.

The judge urged attorneys to make sealed filings "sparingly and wisely" and he chided the prosecution for citing "no legal authority" to seal all details of evidence.

"While it is admirable to attempt to prevent potential tainting of the jury pool, giving counsel free reign to file any such motions under seal is potentially problematic," Ruckriegle wrote.

The judge said he agreed media coverage might threaten the ability to hold a fair trial, but backed the solution offered by media attorneys and Bryant's defense team of filing certain details under seal.

# Afghanistan Hot Topics



(Compiled by CJTF-180 Public Affairs)

## Fighters killed Pakistani in Afghanistan

**SPIN BOLDACK**, Afghanistan (*Reuters*) – Taliban officials said their fighters killed a Pakistani engineer in southern Afghanistan this week and accused two kidnapped Indian road workers of being intelligence agents who were also likely to be killed.

The Pakistani engineer Anwar Shah was killed and another Pakistani wounded when a group of armed men ambushed their car in southern Afghanistan Monday. The two Indians were abducted from a U.S.-funded road project Saturday.

Mullah Sabir Momin, the Taliban's deputy operations commander in the south of Afghanistan, said Shah was killed by Taliban fighters because he was an "American agent."

"We have repeatedly said that no work should be done in Afghanistan in the presence of Americans," he said in a telephone call to Reuters late Monday. "It does not matter whether those involved in such works are engineers, drivers, doctors or others."

"Anyone who assists America or the Afghan government is liable to death. American agents will not be spared even if they are Muslims. They will be killed at an appropriate time."

Taliban intelligence official Mullah Abdul Samad said the two Indians, a soil sampler named Murali and a foreman named Vardharai, employed on the Kandahar-Kabul road, were Indian intelligence agents. Both names are Hindu.

He said documents and maps found on them showed they were involved in bomb blasts at the Afghan-Pakistan border to damage relations between the countries.

"They were monitoring the activities of the Taliban in Afghanistan and collecting information about the hideouts of the Taliban. The construction work on the Kandahar-Kabul highway was just a charade to disguise their activities."

## Meeting on Afghan constitution delayed

**KABUL**, Afghanistan (*AP*) – A historic gathering to ratify a new constitution for this war-ravaged country has been delayed for several days to give delegates time to reach the capital, a constitutional council spokesman said Tuesday.

The government had planned the loya jirga — or grand council — to start Wednesday, but spokesman Farooq Wardak said that would not be possible.

"The delegates need more time to get here," he told The Associated Press. He said the meeting would start Saturday, with addresses from former king Mohammad Zahir Shah and President Hamid Karzai.

Wardak said pre-council meetings have already begun, and some of the 500 delegates — elected in local meetings from each of Afghanistan's 32 provinces — were already trickling into the capital.

Security is a great concern for the gathering, to be held in northwest Kabul at an enormous tent, according to Afghan tradition. A bomb exploded Nov. 22 outside the capital's upscale Intercontinental Hotel, the site of the press center for the loya jirga. The capital, patrolled by a 5,000-strong international peacekeeping force, has been an island of relative stability, but Taliban rebels and their al Qaeda allies have been launching increasingly virulent attacks in the south and east of the country.

Lt. Col. Bryan Hilferty, a U.S. military spokesman, said Monday that American forces have received "specific intelligence" that insurgents might try to target the loya jirga. He gave no specifics, but cited a recent bicycle bomb attack in Kandahar and the Intercontinental bombing.

The 50-page draft constitution was unveiled Nov. 3 after a year of work and many delays. It envisions an Islamic republic with a powerful presidency and a bicameral legislature. The president would be commander in chief of the military, appoint one-third of the legislature's upper house and name judges, military officers, police and national security officials.

It also guarantees a role for women in running the country and enshrines their right to an education. The former Taliban regime imposed a harsh version of Islamic law and banished girls and women from schools and public life.

The grand council is open ended, though Wardak said they were hoping to wrap things up in about 10 days. The delegates will be allowed to approve amendments.

Ratification of the constitution will pave the way for national elections scheduled for June but also likely to be delayed by a month or two.

*"Driver, be advised, we have  
crunchies in the open."*



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By Kevin Kilgore

## Laugh Support